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ABSTRACT

It is proposed that the whole language approach to second language learning is compatible with the concepts of individual learning style and multiple intelligences, with all placing the learner at the center of instructional planning and delivery. Selected strategies are presented to raise teacher awareness of possible classroom techniques to accommodate students' learning style and intelligence preferences in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Focus is on relatively simple methods for adapting traditional textbook lessons. An activity sequence for a sample lesson is presented, specifying teacher behaviors and offering explanations. The sequence is for a text on environmental protection, and includes: a motivational experience; formulation and examination of facts; practice and personalization of the concepts; and application of the concepts to a new personal experience. It is noted that this approach gives students a more central role than is traditionally provided, and takes into consideration their interests and experiences, with frequent invitations to generate and discuss ideas. Appended materials include a portion of the sample text and several first drafts of student writing on the unit. Contains 13 references. (MSE)

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Whole language EFL with style: Adapting traditional texts to diverse learning styles and intelligences

Irma K. Ghosn

Whole language has been a buzzword for a number of years and many language arts teachers describe themselves as "doing whole language" while they may not have a clear understanding of the whole language philosophy (Hudson 1994). Whole language has also found its way to many ESL classes as is evident from the numerous publications in educational journals, and some recent textbook series even claim to be whole language-based. There is also some evidence that the whole language philosophy might work even in EFL settings (Ghosn 1994). "Going whole language" is not, however, simple, and we should not be fooled into believing that we can switch instantly from a more traditional approach to whole language approach just as easily as we might change the daily schedule or decide to adopt a new textbook. The switch is slow, and, at times painful, even in L1 settings. In EFL settings, it is likely to be more so because whole language is essentially a student-centered approach to teaching and learning where the teacher has to be prepared to provide authentic experiences for language learning and be tuned to student interests and needs. In a whole language class, listening, speaking, reading and writing are not separated into fragmented skills, but are kept "whole"; language functions as a vehicle for communication and sharing of ideas in authentic contexts (Rigg 1991); language learning is viewed as a product of an interactive process and thus learners must have opportunities to share and discuss ideas (Newman 1985); the learner is in the center of the curriculum and has choices while the teacher is a facilitator and a "collaborator" (Rigg 1991). Not exactly something that can be accomplished easily in a typical EFL program.

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If the implementation of whole language is in itself difficult at best, why complicate it further with the notion of learning styles? Learning style is concerned with the ways we perceive and gain knowledge, the ways we think and form ideas and values, and the ways we act; research identifies learners as auditory, visual or tactile/kinesthetic, global or analytical (Garbo & Dunn & Dunn 1986), dynamic, analytic, commonsensical or innovative (McCarthy), and so on. Howard Gardner in *Frames of Mind* (1983) presented the notion of multiple intelligences, followed by *Multiple Intelligences-The Theory in Practice* (1993), and Sternberg (1995) suggests that we differ even in our mental self-government style, which can be either legislative, executive or judiciary. Whatever the model, I believe that the concepts of learning style and multiple intelligences, which are based on the notion that we all have our preferred mode of learning, a mode in which we learn best, and particular intellectual strengths, go naturally together with the whole language philosophy since all these theories place the learner at the center of instructional planning and delivery.

The aim here, however, is not to suggest labelling students, but rather to assume that a variety of learning preferences - and a variety of intelligences - exist in any given classroom, and to assure that all students have plenty of opportunities to experiment with the new language and try it out in a variety of contexts, using as many modalities as possible and utilizing their unique individual strengths.

This article does *not* claim to present "the way to do whole language and learning styles", but attempts, by presenting selected strategies, to raise awareness of the possibilities that may exist and that may facilitate students' language learning, especially within the many constraints that EFL teachers often operate. In a truly whole language classroom, the teacher is ready and

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prepared to take advantage of the real learning situations that occur throughout the year - holiday preparations, field trips, school plays - and to follow student interests (Snowball 1994), which may range from dinosaurs to career options. This is rarely possible in a typical EFL class where the teacher is expected to cover a given textbook and make sure that students are ready for official examinations. Thematic units, which are ideal for whole language and learning-style based instruction, may not be feasible either in many EFL settings due to the rigidly regulated materials and curriculum sequences. Developing thematic units within the various restrictions would require creativity and energy beyond what can be reasonably expected. There are, however, some relatively simple ways teachers can use to adapt traditional textbook lessons and make them more learner-centered while tapping into learning styles and the multiple intelligences.

Activity sequence for a sample lesson

World in Danger (See figure 2.) is a reading passage in a fairly typical EFL text, used in grades 4-6, with vocabulary introduced at the beginning, followed by reading and comprehension questions. As the presentation of new strcutures and the review of previously presented ones are not clearly tied in with the reading passage, the result is a fragmented lesson that does not involve the student in any truly meaningful activities. It can, however, be made much more learner-centered using the following strategies; the lesson components are organized around McCarthy's 4MAT Model while the activities attempt to address as many intelligences as feasible within the given context.

Motivational experience

Teacher puts the title on the board, or on a flip chart and ask students to predict what they think the passage is going to be about. Here students may use L1, if necessary, while the teacher, using reflective listening, re-phrases and models the appropriate target language. Teacher asks students to elaborate on their

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predictions and writes all the predictions on the board. Next, s/he displays the illustrations from the passage and asks students what they now think the passage will be about and whether they would like to revise any of their predictions. Students may want to eliminate some of their earlier predictions, and a question mark can be put for those that cause disagreement or hesitation. Teacher can, by modeling, encourage students to raise questions about the issues. (*What is causing the fires?*") This pre-reading activity will allow the teacher to introduce some of the key vocabulary in a meaningful context, but more importantly, it provides the students with a motivation to read: they will be checking for the accuracy of their predictions. It also activates their background knowledge and thus facilitates meaning-making. Many teachers like to use videofilms as a stimulus for an upcoming lesson. However, I find that viewing a film can, without careful structuring and regulation of 'dosage', be a rather passive activity while the prediction activity is more useful in getting all the students actively involved. It also draws more on the imagination and curiosity of the students. A film could be used later as an additional resource on the topics generated. *Modalities/ styles / intelligences accommodated: visual / auditory / innovative / linguistic / logical-mathematical*

Formulation and examination of facts

Students will now read the passage to find answers to the specific questions raised in the previous activity (i.e. *"Why are elephants killed?" "Why are forests important to us?" "What is causing the fires?"*). After reading, students discuss the answers they found and attempt to discover, with teacher guidance, relationships between the issues. Student interests guide the discussion and all concerns or comments are validated .

The teacher then proceeds to teach the target vocabulary and structures using pictures, models, flash cards and so on. Ideally, student interests will determine the vocabulary to be emphasized.

Students sequence sentences from the passage. A group of 4 students is given 4 sentences, a sentence each, printed on a 7-8 cm wide posterboard strips. The task is for the students to arrange themselves in a line facing the class, so that the sentence can be read from left to right. In the meantime, the rest of the class works in pairs doing the same with smaller size sentence strips. When finished, the class compares the group's result with the pair-sequenced paragraphs. If the teacher writes the sentences so that more than one solution is possible, a discussion can be generated that requires students to justify their decisions, engaging them in more authentic language use. This activity works well as an introduction to paragraph writing if the sentences provided will include a clear topic sentence, supporting detail sentences and a concluding sentence. ("*Today elephants are like the dodos were three hundred years ago. Around the world, 200 elephants are killed every day. Man kills elephants to get the ivory from their tusks. Soon elephants may die out altogether*"). By varying the order of the sentences, students will also begin to see the subtle differences in emphasis that result from the difference in the order of sentences. ("*Man kills elephants to get the ivory from their tusks. Around the world 200 elephants are killed every day. Soon elephants may die out altogether.*" vs. "*Soon elephants may die out altogether. Around the world 200 elephants are killed every day. Man kills elephants to get the ivory from their tusks.*") This particular text is quite simplified, but the simplicity can be capitalized on when teaching organization of ideas.

To examine the concepts, students categorize the vocabulary words, develop diagrams of erosion, classify man's behavior described in the passage as beneficial or harmful, and relate the issues to their own experience and environment.

Modalities / styles / intelligences accommodated: visual / auditory / tactile-kinesthetic / analytical / linguistic / logical-mathematical / interpersonal

Practice and personalization of the concepts

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Practice and personalization of the concepts

Instead of filling in teacher-prepared cloze exercises, students prepare worksheets and write questions for each other. The teacher should encourage questions that require careful re-reading of the passage and critical thinking and not leave students on the level of simple factual questions that can be answered directly from the text. To involve students in language activities where they can practice the vocabulary and structures of the lesson, the teacher will have them select from the following assignments.

1. *Write a letter to an elephant hunter, telling him what you think about elephants/ his job and asking him to stop hunting elephants.* (this works well in pairs with students taking turns as 'the scribe'). When they have finished, they trade letters with other students. Now everyone becomes an elephant hunter whose task is to respond to the letter they received (again in pairs). *You have just received a letter from a student in [your country] , asking you to stop killing elephants. Write a reply letter, telling the student why you hunt elephants and explaining why you cannot stop.* The pairs then read aloud the letter they received, and their response to it. The change in roles will enable students to realize that there are different viewpoints to issues. Depending on the resources available, the teacher may want to encourage students to carry out research to find out more about the issue before writing their letters.

2. *Imagine that you are a sailor who has just visited the island of Mauritius and are now heading home. Write a letter to your family telling about your experiences on the island.*

Both letter-writing assignments will offer a natural context for introducing the basic format of letters.

3. *Imagine that you are the last Dodo. Write a journal entry where you express your feelings as you spend your days in the zoo in England.* This assignment is not as simple as it may seem. It requires the student to re-read the text carefully to

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establish the facts, and then, by using sophisticated inferential thinking, to imagine what feelings may have been involved in that context.

4. *You are a newspaper reporter. Write a report about the death of the last Dodo.* Students choosing this assignment will need to view some newspapers to identify the basic characteristics of news reports. (In an integrated curriculum this activity would involve study of the historical context, the methods and styles used to pass information to the general public at the time.)

5. *You are a TV reporter. Prepare a short report about the problems related to burning forests. You may want to use visuals and music / sound effects to make your report clearer to your audience.*. (Students can form a team to work on this, preparing the actual report, the visuals and possible sound effects.)

6. *Your mother has just told you that she is planning to buy a beautiful table she saw at the gift shop, a table made of ivory and precious wood. Write a dialogue (and present to class, if you wish) between your mother and yourself about the issue. Modalities / styles / intelligences accommodated : visual / auditory / analytic/ commonsense / linguistic / musical / interpersonal.*

Application of the concepts to a new personal experience

The teacher will ask the students if in their country or area there are problems similar to those mentioned in the passage. After identifying possible problems, students select the one they are interested in and set up a simulation or a debate. Should the teacher be fortunate enough to teach in a context where no environmental problems exist (or if the existing issues are politically too sensitive to tackle in class), students can choose from the topics presented in the passage the one they find most interesting. Students will draw from a hat their roles, for example, an elephant hunter, an ivory merchant, a conservationist, and a government official, or a farmer living at the edge of the rain forest, a member of a tribe living in the rainforest, and a timber merchant. Ideally, students would read about the topic in informational books, relevant newspaper and/or magazine articles (provided by the

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teacher), interview people knowledgable about the topic (other subject area teachers are ideal resources!)and view a film related to the topic. However, since few, if any resources are available in many EFL settings, students will need to rely on their own understanding of the topic and their creativity. In this case, the teacher will arrange for a class discussion where students examine the issue (i.e. burning forests) and attempt to identify who may be involved in and affected by it, either directly or indirectly. The teacher may need to do some research in advance in order to be well informed on the subject! The teacher will also have to remain objective and not allow personal judgments to influence the course of the discussion. During the discussion students will be using the target vocabulary and structures, but the language used is likely to extend beyond that expected by the text as students may need additional language to deal with the topic. Students then prepare for a debate, a simulated press conference, or a town meeting. This may sound as a very ambitious task, and something that is beyond the students at this age and proficiency level. However, the goal is not to produce "teacher-perfect" performances, but to engage the children in active, meaningful language use through a highly motivating activity. Students may also choose to prepare booklets about endangered species, or demonstrations and models of erosion and its effects, and so on. Some students might be interested in working on producing a pantomimed, narrated presentation describing the relationship of man and nature. Again, they can use visuals and sound effects and compose a song, a poem, or a rap to accompany the presentation. These activities can also be used to support the simulation.

Modalities / styles / intelligences accommodated : visual / tactile-kinesthetic / analytic / innovative / common sense / dynamic / linguistic / logical-mathematical / spatial / musical / interpersonal / intrapersonal.

What is different here from the typical EFL approach is that students have a more central role. Their interests and experiences are taken into consideration

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when planning the activities, they are frequently invited to generate ideas, the discussions follow their interests and concerns rather than those of the teacher or the text, and they have *choices*. Language here is not fragmented into skill exercises, but kept "*whole*" and *relevant* . When students communicate ideas, share experiences and debate issues, their language is embedded in a meaningful context and very relevant to them. The variety of activities will assure that all children will have an opportunity, at least to some extent and at least part of the time, to learn in their preferred modality.

Naturally, a lesson such as the one described, cannot be covered in 2-3 sessions, but will probably take several days, depending on how often the class meets and for how long at a time. The idea, however, is not for the teacher to plough through all the suggested activities, but to select the ones that meet the needs and interests of the particular students and that support the objectives of the given program. This is an important point to keep in mind since there cannot really be any "whole language lesson plan" as the lessons will take shape based on the learners and their interests, and the teacher acts as the facilitator for their learning. Thus in each given class, the above lesson is likely to proceed in its own unique way, different from the others.

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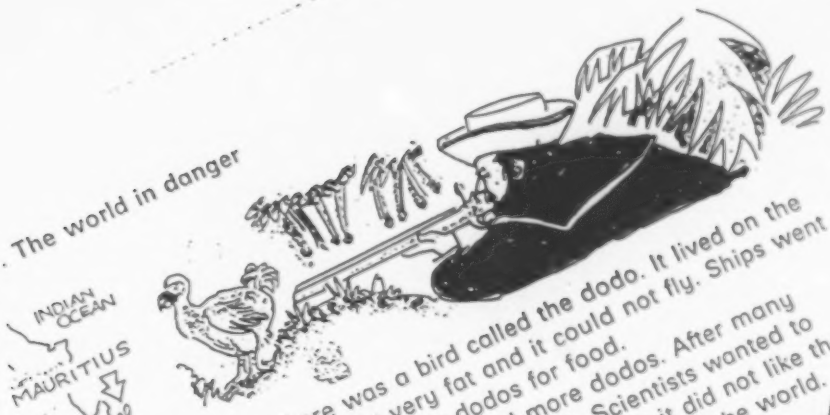
The world in danger



ıree hundred years ago there was a bird called the dodo. It lived on the sland of Mauritius. The dodo was very fat and it could not fly. Ships went to Mauritius and the sailors hunted the dodos for food. Year after year the sailors killed more and more dodos. After many years there was only one dodo left on the island. Scientists wanted to save the dodo so they took it to a zoo in England. But it did not like the weather or the food and it died. That was the last dodo in the world.

Today elephants are like the dodos were three hundred years ago. Men are killing so many elephants that they may die out altogether. Did you know that every day 200 elephants are killed in the world? Men kill elephants because they want the ivory from their tusks. They make ornaments and jewellery from the tusks.

Some animals die out because men kill them. Other animals die ou because men destroy their food. A lot of animals live in forests. B the world men are cutting and burning forests. Every minute of t hectares of trees are destroyed in the world. A hectare is 10,00

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Student work samples from a remedial class of 9-11 year olds. First drafts.

I Read about animals and I knew that your Job Is killing elephant ~~on~~ to take the Ivory from the tusks to be rich or to have much money. If you want to make money you can take a good Job or do something that is clean and ~~without~~ get thing without taking thing without killing I hope you understood what I meen I like animals so much. I hope you will finish killing animals.

② Dear brother

I can't stop hunting elefants because there to much people are buying ivory and they are paying to much money. I am getting to much money ~~they are~~ we are making from them rings and tables and so many things its so nice and if you like to live with me come I am ~~buying~~ buying for you. good luck

VAD

3. DearMother From your faithful son Maroun.

Hi, how are you, I miss the days I used to speend with my Brother and Sisters. I will be Retuning home after one moth, We had alot of fun while hunting Dodoes, and Fishing, Lastweek we caught more then 20 Dodo birds and ate them but I hatted seeing the dodoes dieing so they killed and I ate, bye for now I have to retu to my work. Love Maroun.

OXOXOXOX.

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(1)

I am scared I am in the zoo of England the weather is bad And I heat the food I am the last dodos And in Mauritus the Elephants are going to die so I am scared I am not hungry the people came to see me And all of the people wants buy me but they see no sell they put my next to the snakes the Scienceist come And they do sperimeuts with my body they give me drogs if I don't eat them they open my cage catch my And give it to me I don't no what I am eating but I don't have to much time I am to tier so I am not Hungry so I will die AND no more dodos in the world good bye

And this is How the last dodo die

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